

The Surfacing of Great Power Rivalries in The Indian Ocean: Indonesia's Urgency to Empower The Indian Ocean Rim Association

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Abstract

The Indian Ocean is the third largest of the world's oceanic divisions. As a critical sea trade route marked with the presence of strategic chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, and the Mandeb Strait, Its ever strategic position has eventually led to a potential turbulent security environment, as states fall deeper into a sense of vulnerability because of the fragile security of the region. Connecting the continents of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and consisting of tens of littoral states, contemporarily the Indian Ocean has been home to coercively interpreted policies which among them include China's "String of Pearls," and the numerous naval exercises conducted such as the MALABAR and AUSINDEX, acting as an offensive military posturing to many. As the Indian Ocean slowly evolves being a centre stage of geopolitical supremacy contestation, the paper argues for the urgent need for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to adopt measures in advance of the tempestuous security environment. Being the Chairman of IORA for 2015-2017, Jokowi's 'Global Maritime Axis' will be tested by how he plans to respond towards the growing volatile security situation. It further argues of possible engagements Jokowi can take in order to solidify the very concept of 'Global Maritime Axis' that he conceived, by arguing the need for him to establish foundations of cooperation that would bind IORA member states as well as great powers which are critical towards the Indian Ocean's sea-lanes of communication, and the need to take the step of replacing the highest authority of the IORA, to a Heads of State Summit, in order to clout more of a significant political influence in the region.

Keywords: Indonesia, Indian Ocean, Regionalism, Institutionalism, Foreign Policy

A. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ocean is arguably one of the most strategic and valuable oceans in the world. With an abundance of resources located, connecting numerous continents, and home to tens of littoral states, It is no

surprise that the oceans will be the center stage of the upcoming political contestations. As a matter of fact, it already is. Though not heavily exposed at the current moment, the Indian Ocean represents an interpreted volatile security

environment, filled with great powers that have been contesting with one another, to secure the sea lanes they deem foundational towards the International trade. But the offensive military posturing present today marks an immense drawback to the efforts of organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association, a pan-regional organization aimed to advance peaceful and economic cooperation among the littoral states.

Geopolitical rivalries have risen, mainly concerning China and India, two of the great powers holding an immense interest in the region. Such rivalries are caused not only because of the abundance of resources located in the Indian Ocean but because the concern here is to secure the Gulf petroleum exports. For energy supplies, the travel starts in the Persian Gulf, all the way to the East (Asia). But besides being a route for energy, one-fifth of the world's energy supplies navigate through these seas (Laipson, Pandya, 2009), establishing a top priority for states dependent on Middle Eastern oil, to engage upon policies that would secure their needs.

The question that arises thus is the long-term stability of the Indian Ocean, and this is where Indonesia comes into place. Since Jokowi's election in 2014, there has been a constant rhetoric of 'Global

Maritime Axis,' a maritime predominant foreign policy that would eventually maximize Indonesia's strategic position being in between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This concept though has been far from effective, and still until this very day, raises questions of what does Jokowi want with this idea. An inward, or outward based policy? A grand vision, a policy, or a strategy? The lack of clarity not only raises confusion, but also raises an urgency for Jokowi to step up his foreign policy game, and start embracing the words that he continuously echoed in the past until present times. Such clarity can be achieved by strategically using the IORA, as a venue to realize his concept of a global maritime axis, by engaging on several key elements that not only will realize his visions, but also establish significant change towards the current political environment of the Indian Ocean. Keep in mind that Indonesia is also a littoral state, a state heavily influenced by the conditions that have happened in the Straits of Malacca concerning numerous non-traditional threats. So it would be in Indonesia's utmost interest to establish the foundations through steps that would be explained further in the following pages.

It is no question that the vast seas of the Indian Ocean are filled with numerous resources. To name a few, it is known to be

the home of fish stock, deep sea minerals, and an immense potential of holding unexplored, energy reserves (Amjad, 2007). This paper does not neglect that fact, yet will only focus on the political dynamics of the sea lane of communications in the Indian Ocean, as well as Indonesia's position in such a matter.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

To be able to see the status quo, and to predict the future political environment of the Indian Ocean, one needs to combine numerous concepts developed by International Relations academics. First of all is the concept of great powers, and the influence it has towards the regional political environment. Observing the foreign policies of great powers is one fascinating thing to do. Though still arguably open on the precise definition of great powers, Mearsheimer, a prominent International Relations scholar and founder of Offensive Realism, made an ever impactful research on this particular matter. He described great powers as those states having sufficient military assets to challenge conventional warfare with strong states (Mearsheimer, 2014).

States that classify herein are those known as the strongest regionally and is in a constant state to seek regional hegemony. A status that only the US currently holds as of present times. But this fascinating analysis if linked to this paper would reveal the offensive military posturing and foreign policies of both India and China, two emerging economies and powers, seeking to dominate their region and clout a more significant influence compared to any other state in the area. As the Indian Ocean consists of numerous emerging powers, what has eventually occurred in the Indian Ocean thus is a contestation of powers, among the great powers. The contestations though does not side-line the littoral states, but at this current issue, the level of desperation is high towards the courses of action taken by great powers. What solidifies this concern also is the latent and military power that these states possess. They have both a strong socio-economic capacity to build military power, and also equipped already in the status quo with a decently strong military power.

The second level of analysis in on a geopolitical level of analysis. Early geopolitical theorists have mostly focused on the rational of states expanding or annexing their defined state territory under International law. But Ratzel in 1940 went

further by providing analysis of the case of sea expansions that was conducted by Germany during the Second World War, in which Germany sought an expansionist agenda in both land and sea (Agnew, Mitchell, Toal, 2013). In the contemporary times, this concept has been packaged more neatly by great powers. An example being the US, going through oceans worldwide while embracing the concept of ‘freedom of navigation’ to justify such actions. The South China Sea is another great example, of China’s attempt to expand land, that would eventually lead to the more stretched out exclusive economic zone of China. But the Indian Ocean does not consist of this reality, which makes it a more complex security environment. The need to secure shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean has led to strategies that are not overt in nature as being an expansionist policy. States like China through the development and investments of ports surrounding the Indian Ocean, India’s attempt to solidify its primacy in the region through naval exercises, reflects a complicated reality in which foreign policies must be seen as patterns, with geopolitical supremacy over the Indian Oceans being the ultimate goal.

The last level of analysis concerns the Neoliberal Institutionalism. As globalization prevails, we are witnessing an

abundance of actors besides the state, having a significant influence on the course of world politics. The opening of borders became the foundational assumption of the neoliberal institutionalism, in their basic premise was that cooperation was possible to be conducted through an actor known as International organizations. This concept further elaborates on the dominance of states in such organizations, driven by their individual national interest. But as cooperation would establish a greater good for those states, compromises would be made, therefore making the grounds of peaceful cooperation among the states (Stein, 2008). Neoliberal Institutionalism is what makes institutions such as IORA able to exist. United by a common interest of advancing economic interests and securing the Indian Ocean, IORA was thus established with the aim of handling such a mutual interest of the littoral states, as well as foreign powers having interests in the region. This is a critical theory to equip ourselves with if we are to predict any significant changes of the organization, which will be the primary emphasis of the upcoming pages of this paper.

C. DISCUSSION

Great Power Political Dynamics In The Indian Ocean

Contemporary power rivalries taking place in the South China Sea reflects a particular message, of the immediate importance of both energy security, and sea-lanes of communications are for state actors. As we currently move towards an ever open globalized world, the interconnections among states have led to a constant insecurity of states, as they become more fragile of the dynamics taking place even on another half of the world. The political dynamics of the Indian Ocean may one day impede the global trade of not only littoral states but also of numerous states which engage upon International trade on those oceans. Thus it is essential to equip us firstly with the understanding of what makes the Indian Ocean so strategic, as well as the contemporary turbulent security environment of the region.

1.1. The Strategic Importance of the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean's supreme and foremost importance lays upon its strategic position, connecting the likes of the African Continent, Middle East, all the way to Asia. Hundreds to thousands go through the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean daily, pushing the

need to secure such sea-lanes of communications to maintain stability and continuity of any economic trades taking place in the region. This urgency thus has created certain paranoia of states with the intention of securing such sea-lanes. But in the application, power rivalries eventually surface, though not overt, the patterns are visible. The question arises thus is how could this come to be?

Out of the global oceanic divisions, the Indian Ocean does not position the highest. It is only the third largest following the Pacific, and the Atlantic Oceans. But what makes the Indian Ocean unique is that it comprises of three strategic chokepoints, namely the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandab Strait, and the Strait of Malacca. It thus connects the likes of the African Continent, Middle East, and Asia, in a single sea-lane located at the very heart of the Indian Ocean.

But the security of the Indian Ocean goes beyond of the simple securing of the sea-lanes of communication, as it also constitutes as a major concern for energy security. Basic figures have shown, that 32.2 millions of barrels of crude oil and petroleum are transported each day through the strategic chokepoints mentioned above (Albert, 2016). As commodities have been popular to be carried through seaborne

commerce, energy seems also to be included, as approximately 2/3 of the world's maritime oil trades pass the Indian Ocean (Goud, Mookherjee, 2015). With such figures, it is no surprise that the Indian Ocean can be concluded as one of the most important energy routes when it comes to the case of International trade.

The millions of barrels of oil transported each day through the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean can be attributed to the Strait of Hormuz, linking the Persian Gulf region with their vast amounts of oil supplies, to South Asia, all the way to China. As demands for energy rapidly increase, especially among emerging economies and populations, energy exports thus act as a lucrative business for the principal oil producers of the world, including United Arab Emirates, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia (Amjad, 2007). As the sea-lanes of communication act as a strategic region for both littoral states and the overall global economic trade, tensions have also arisen. Tensions among states are based upon the desperate need to secure the sea-lanes for the mere national interest of their energy security and overall International trade.

1.2. The Surfacing of Great Power Rivalries

The strategic value of the Indian Ocean has led to the region's security environment being volatile. The 32 littoral states facing the Indian Ocean are a unique mix of diversity, and some separated from thousands of miles of sea. Among them you have developed and emerging economies, which has throughout the years projected their influence on the oceans. Australia for example, through the Eastward section of the Indian Ocean, has made significant build-ups and control over their Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands. Even further, Australia has shown the importance of the Indian Ocean through their first ever conducted AUSINDEX military exercise held last September 2015 in the Bay of Bengal, between the Indian Navy and the Royal Australian Navy (Parameswaran, 2015). The projection of military might of two great powers of the Indian Ocean, is a response towards a possible unwanted development of a turbulent security environment. Though revolutionary, the contestations of might is no match compared to the rivalry between India and China in the region.

To understand the contemporary geopolitical dynamics of the present Indian Ocean, one needs to consider China's

emerging economy, and the price required to pay. As the expansion of China's industrial and manufacturing commodities spreads exceptionally fast, energy demands will follow along (the additional x-factor being China's population demand of energy). China currently is the second largest consumer and importer of oil, which has provided 54.8% of China's oil requirements (Zhang, 2011), which majorly are sourced from the Gulf States. This reality has led to two major concepts of foreign policy that have often been quoted by India and its western counterparts, as a reason to contain China in the Indian Ocean. First being the 'Malacca Dilemma,' a term coined by President Hu Jintao in 2003 to describe how it is only through the Strait of Malacca that China can receive the 80% of the total amount of imported oil from the Middle East and Africa (Chen, 2010), as other sea-lane alternative routes would raise total transportation time and cost. The second concept is the 'String of Pearls,' a geopolitical analysis showing China's heavily influenced and invested islands and ports located in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean (Khurana, 2008).

The concept of 'String of Pearls' has been stated as an exaggeration of China's maritime interests. Though said that way, states such as India openly embraces

foreign policies filled with paranoia, as if it was true that China plans on isolating India from the Indian Ocean, It would be an immense blow to India's geopolitical aspirations of their backyard. As China is spreading its footprints in the immediate neighbourhood of India, India has responded through a series of naval capacity projections, including the MALABAR, an annual trilateral naval exercise with the US and Japan (regularly conducted since 2002) (Rajagopalan & Mishra, 2015), the VARUNA with France since 2002, and KONKAN with the UK since 2004. Annual military posturing in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean in general, not only projects India's naval capacity as well as pictured potential allies in cases of security breaches, but this is also inherently necessary for India to showcase such position as 80% of India's energy are also imported from the Middle East (Singh, 2015).

Despite all of these current political dynamics, a major problem arises because of the uncertainty of the US response as of yet. The US does have ground in the Indian Ocean through the American leased British Island of Diego Garcia (Pillalammari, 2015), located below Sri Lanka. As expected, the US foreign policy on the Indian Ocean has primarily advocated the

concept of ‘Freedom of Navigation,’ and involvements with India’s naval power projections. But of course, it would be too early to guess upon Washington’s definitive move and policy in the Indian Ocean region. But despite uncertainties of the evolving political climate of the Indian Ocean, special initiatives needs to take place to maintain a stable and controlled Indian Ocean.

Balancing Power Rivalries: Indonesia And The Indian Ocean Rim Association

Being a source of an abundance of security threats, both traditional and non-traditional, the political climate in the Indian Ocean is one very much unpredictable, and that itself is not a good sign. The question that arises is how the IORA, an organization embracing all the littoral states as well as partnering itself with major great powers, is able to clout influence on the political climate of the Indian Ocean Region, without its presence being neglected as in the case of the vast majority of regional organizations (example being ASEAN and SAARC). Below I outline the fundamentals of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as well as Indonesia’s role in such an organization. I then go on and explain Indonesia’s role in the IORA, as well as

measures that should be taken to realize a more peaceful political climate in the Indian Ocean, but still aligning with the fundamental values of the Indonesian contemporary foreign policy.

2.1. Reviewing Two Decades of Membership: Indonesia in the Indian Ocean Rim

Though extremely diverse in nature, states of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) are united by the Indian Ocean. Previously this result of pan-regionalism in the Indian Ocean was known as the Indian Ocean Region-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) after its establishment in March 1997 (Rumley, Doyle, Chaturvedi, 2012). IORA consists of states bordering the Indian Ocean, with currently 21 member states and seven dialogue partners. Among the members of the IORA, despite immense differences, are all united to maintain and promote maritime safety & security, disaster risk management, trade & investment facilitation, fisheries management, tourism & cultural exchange, as well as academic, science and technology.

In recent years there has been a strict emphasis upon an open regionalism with particular attention towards economic co-operation. But as tensions have recently

arisen, maritime safety and security have been persistently echoed in all the major forums of the IORA, including the highest authority of the IORA, the Council of Ministers that meets every two years (or whenever the Council decides to conduct meetings). Though often echoed in rhetoric, maritime security still lacks the proper long-term vision and conduct, in establishing a more stable political environment in the Indian Ocean. Such lacking are reflected by the very fact that numerous non-traditional security threats including piracy, is conducted without the inclusion of IORA, and strictly engaged multilaterally by the states willing to guard vessels going through the Gulf of Aden. An outsider would see that an organization consisting of such vast areas of ocean, is profoundly underinvested, and not taken seriously as much as regional organizations like the EU and ASEAN. But littoral states which will bear the most if insecurity escalates in the region, have shown potential and an indication of change.

As Indonesia, since June 2015 took the rotation of Chairman of the IORA from Australia (2013-2015), expectations will be high. Jokowi through his Foreign Affairs Minister, Retno Marsudi, has constantly expressed how this will be in align with Indonesia's grand vision of establishing a

global maritime axis, as Indonesia is at the centre of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Since 2015, we have seen several communiqués resulted, which aims to uphold stability in the Indian Ocean. Take for example the fact that Indonesia is the only chairman in history, which is boldly willing to take the theme of "Strengthening Maritime Cooperation in a Peaceful and Stable Indian Ocean" (KEMLU, 2016). Indonesia's Chairman Terms are known to be also of great strategy, as IORA is known to be greatly active since India's Chairman Terms of 2011-2013.

It has already reached half the time, yet Indonesia has not shown any significant moves to establish a permanent change in the IORA. Since taking the seat of Chairman, Indonesia has helped craft the Padang Communique 2015, as well as the IORA Maritime Cooperation Declaration 2015. The ministers of the member states of IORA during the 15th meeting of the Council of Ministers, established a communiqué which fundamentally, will not create any significant change towards the current political dynamics of the Indian Ocean. The only substantive on matters of security is Article 6, and even that focuses merely on establishing a more coherent regional cooperation in face of non-traditional security threats such as

unregulated fishing, piracy, drug trafficking, etc. (IORA, 2015). Even that, it was not clear on how accurately they would coordinate this matter among all of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean. An ordinary problematic matter of formality in International treaties, that has no concrete measures on how that would be done. There have been talks of establishing an IORA Concord, but that has yet to show any results.

2.2. Indonesia's Urgency to Exert Influence Through the Indian Ocean Rim Association

Consisting of thousands of islands, it has always been the fate of Indonesia to adopt a maritime-oriented policy. Though heavily voiced as an advantage, the consistency of thousands of islands establishes an immediate risk, as Indonesia's naval power will be in need to be empowered, to patrol the vast seas of Indonesia. Considering the dilemma, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), former President of the Republic of Indonesia, during his two terms, have introduced the discourse of maritime security which will be intertwined with the national policies of Indonesia. But this context of maritime security has never been fully embraced until Jokowi was elected president in 2014.

One of the major foreign policy shifts that Jokowi embraces since elected is Indonesia as the 'Global Maritime Axis.' The discourse surfaced since the electoral debates in 2014. To make matters simple, this concept consists of 5 pillars (Agastia, Perwita, 2015), including Maritime Culture, Maritime Development, Maritime Economy, Maritime Diplomacy, and Maritime Security. The global maritime axis concept was then further elaborated as Jokowi continually voiced out his plan to bring the Indian Ocean back to Indonesia's regional canvas, and making Indonesia evolve becoming a power in between the two continents, and the two oceans of which Indonesia is a littoral state of (India and Pacific Oceans) (Liow, Shekhar, 2014).

Although massively embraced and supported in rhetoric by the Indonesian people and the global community, Jokowi's global maritime axis is not without its issues. The most fundamental being the lack of clarity of what precisely is this very concept, a vision, strategy, or a policy. The confusion has led many analysts to confusion, as we see Jokowi continuously conduct domestic and foreign policies painted as means to achieve this global maritime axis. Since the electoral debates in 2014, we have witnessed a strong emphasis on Indonesia being a civilizational hub

because of the strategic location between two major oceans. Outwardly speaking, this is far from expectation. And thus this is a major issue, as the whole maritime advancement discourses that Jokowi often echo is heavily hyped, leading to the overly built maritime euphoria on the domestic and International fronts.

Confusions became more evident, as his maritime policies have tended to lean inwards, rather than outwards, or in other words, not a foreign policy. An example of this is how the outwards aspect of global maritime axis has been absent, while inwards, we see a greater emphasis on establishing stronger connectivity of the thousands of islands in Indonesia. The Inward policy orientation is marked with the project construction of 35 ports, in which 33 among them are located in the less-developed parts of Indonesia (Ekawati, 2016). The ports of Indonesia has been categorized as highly under-invested, as well as neglected; therefore this classifies as an outstanding achievement. But the only downfall of this is that it solidifies the portrayed ambiguity of Jokowi's global maritime axis, being more of an inward policy. This point can be proven problematic in the upcoming decade, as we see power rivalries have become more visible in the International community

when it comes to the Indian Ocean. Ideally, Jokowi is in need of conceptualizing a global maritime axis based foreign policy, which touches the turbulent environment of the Indian Ocean.

One of the more peaceful avenues to exert influence to create or at least have control of the political dynamics in the Indian Ocean is through the Indian Ocean Rim Association. This particular policy is strategic and less-coercive, as not only Indonesia is the current Chairman of the IORA, but also considering that engagement with International organizations to maintain good order and peace has always been the characteristics of the Indonesian foreign policy. Security of the sea-lanes of communication of the Indian Ocean is Indonesia's priority, considering the difficulties Indonesia has had throughout history in managing non-traditional threats that surfaced in the Straits of Malacca. As the Indian Ocean evolves being a major shipping lane for global commerce, Indonesia's primary focus should be on building the foundations of cooperative relations among the littoral states of the Indian Ocean, with the inclusion of great foreign powers that potentially can change the course of political dynamics in the region. Thus in establishing a peaceful regional security

architecture in the Indian Ocean, Indonesia should re-embrace its foreign policy of establishing International cooperative norms, such as those adopted In ASEAN.

Historically speaking, Indonesia has been known as the architect of ASEAN institutions and norms (Putra, 2015). Indonesia became the driving force of the establishment of the Asian Zone for Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in November 1971 and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in February 1976 (ASEAN, 1971) (Liow, 1995). Both aimed during that time, to counter external interference, especially to solidify ASEAN's political solidarity during the wake of revolutionary communism. Just a decade ago we also witnessed how the transition to democracy has successfully led to Indonesia being the main pusher of democratically based institutions to be adopted in ASEAN (Garnaut, 2012), including the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Political and Security Community 2015.

IORA is in need to figure out the issue of offensive military posturing by states currently taking place in the Indian Ocean. It will be difficult to halt any unilateral decision makings such as naval exercises, yet regulating a collectively

agreed code of conduct is necessary to at least establish common grounds of cooperation, and set limits. A legal document like the TOC is feasible to be negotiated especially to regulate both traditional and non-traditional threats occurring in the Indian Ocean. Cooperation is achievable, as we witness the numerous cooperation taking place in face of piracy in the Straits located in the Indian Ocean. An example is MALSINSO (Trilateral Coordinated Patrols for Malacca Strait), in which Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia conducted a non-stop patrol in the Malacca Strait (Collin, 2016). Cooperation also occurred through the Riyadh Memorandum of Understanding in 2005. Comprising of Gulf States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), the Memorandum had a primary aim of inspecting the cargos of the foreign ships that docked in those member states (Gupta, 2010).

Considering Indonesia's strategic position of Chairman, cooperation should be heavily embraced, because also the Indian Ocean's security architecture is far from predictable, agreeing on grounds of freedom of navigation, and cooperation based patrols, for example, would clearly establish grounds of reassurance and collaboration among littoral states and great

powers of the Indian Ocean (Nelson, Sulaiman, 2015). The additional is that Indonesia is also able to reassure states in the region that through the crafting of a code of conduct in the Indian Ocean, Jokowi's global maritime axis is not leaning towards a coercive based foreign policy. The lack of clarity of Jokowi's global maritime axis has led multiple interpretations, including predicted possibilities of Indonesia's benign intentions, as many have seen for example the current Indonesian Minister for Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Susi Pudjiastuti, of having the policy of blowing up any foreign ships illegally trespassing the EEZ of Indonesia.

Besides an emphasis on establishing the foundations of peaceful relations in the Indian Ocean, Indonesia in the remaining years of its Chairman position in the IORA needs to look carefully at the structure of the organization. IORA includes a vast amount of region, yet remains highly under-developed, and under-invested. One of the causes for this is that the highest authority of the IORA is through its Council of Ministers. The organization is desperately In need of a stronger structure that can clout a more substantial political influence. One of the platforms to realize this is the establishment of a Heads of

States Summit to replace the Council of Ministers to being the highest authority in the IORA. That way, powers will take serious of the courses of action the summit decides upon. An example of this is ASEAN through its ASEAN Summit. Though arguable on its effectiveness, the courses of actions taken in the ASEAN Summit, has shaped the political dynamics of the South East Asian Region, and taken seriously by foreign powers, marked with the active engagements in the numerous outwards policies of ASEAN, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN+3, and much more.

D. CONCLUSION

It is no question that the vast seas of the Indian Ocean are filled with numerous resources. But the International trade that goes through this region is one that we should keep an eye on. As the oceans transport commodities including manufactured goods from Asia, mineral and ores mined in Africa, and supply energy (petroleum, gas) sourced from the Middle Eastern states, it is no surprise that the Indian Ocean is filled with great powers exerting their influence to secure their export-import trades. Energy security is an important matter, and in this case, with India and China at the forefront of the

supremacy contestations of the Indian Ocean, it does not surface any surprises. Emerging economies tend to have similar patterns of needs, such as a surmountable amount of energy resources imported to fulfil the growing industry's demands, as well as their overly populated population.

The security environment of the contemporary Indian Ocean that we live today has an uncertain future, but one that through this paper I elaborate will most likely be filled with instability, caused by the surfacing of great power rivalries. The great power rivalries are an alarming development and one that states such as Indonesia cannot stand by in the corner and witness as contestations take place. The key here is empowering the Indian Ocean Rim Association, a point that many analysts won't make as there simply is no life invested in the organization. But IORA holds great potential, as it is the only organization able to unite the numerous continents and states bordering themselves with the oceans. Jokowi has long echoed this concept of a global maritime axis that until today continues to bring a lot of confusion. Indonesia's chairman position is the best time to clarify the lack of policies directed under the concept of a global maritime axis, and further embrace this need to empower the IORA and start

building the foundations of cooperation in the Indian Ocean, as Indonesia will still be the Chairman of IORA until 2017. Though constrained by time, Indonesia must hold on to this concept, in order for the idea to resurface despite the changes that will occur on IORA in the upcoming years. Military posturing, development of ports in specified areas, are things that cannot be intervened as it concerns the national sovereignty of states. But, failing to construct a basic foundation on values of cooperation and peace, will deteriorate relations even further, making it too late to control the volatile political environment that most likely will be present in the upcoming years to come.

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